

LBJ Linked Castro to JFK Death

Tapes reveal Johnson doubted Warren report

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Washington — President Lyndon Johnson thought Cuban President Fidel Castro played a role in the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, but worried that a retaliatory strike on Cuba could lead to nuclear war, according to a new book.

He said publicly blaming Castro would generate a public outcry for an attack on Cuba or the Soviet Union that could "check us into a war that can kill 40 million Americans in an hour."

According to the book, "The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964," by historian Michael R. Beschloss, Johnson also told the late Sen. Richard Russell in 1964 that he did not believe the conclusion of the Warren Commission, of which Russell was a member, that Kennedy was killed by a lone gunman.

The book casts Russell (D-Ga.) as a reluctant member of the commission who was pressured into signing the report against his will.

"I'm just worn out, fighting over that

darned report," Russell is quoted in the book as having said on one tape. "Well, I don't believe it."

"I don't either," Johnson said.

Newsweek magazine, in its edition on newsstands today, carries excerpts of the book, which details conversations from the secret tape recordings Johnson kept running during his stay in the White House. The book, published by Simon & Schuster, is to appear in bookstores this week.

The tapes also reveal that Johnson had strong reservations about involvement in Vietnam. "I stayed awake last night thinking of this thing," he tells his national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, in May, 1964. "It looks to me like we're getting into another Korea . . . I don't think we can fight them 10,000 miles away from home . . . I don't think it's worth fighting for . . . It's just the biggest damned mess that I ever saw."

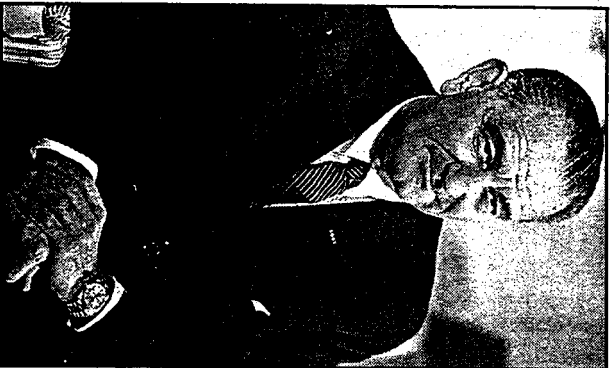
Politics, the tapes reveal, was part of the decision to bomb North Viet-

nam in August, 1964, following a second incident in the Gulf of Tonkin — which later was shown never to have happened.

After the first incident, Johnson called Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to instruct him to gather together people from the Senate and House Armed Services committees. "I want to leave an impression on background . . . that we're gonna be firm as hell," the president said.

In a conversation with former Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield in May, 1964, Johnson suggests he might use the FBI to investigate Republican campaign contributions to get back at them for investigating his family finances.

"They've been down inspecting Miz Johnson's property in Texas and they've harassed and harrassed her every day since we've been here," he said. "The FBI can look into their contributions and it won't look very good."



AP File Photo, 1964
A new book sheds light on Lyndon Johnson.